

EastPoint Promise Zone: Executive Summary

The EastPoint Promise Zone (EPZ) is an initiative of the City of San Antonio, in partnership with the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County, the San Antonio Housing Authority, San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE) and SA2020. Support partners include San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), Judson Independent School District, St. Philip's College and private sector businesses, employers and investors. The EPZ contains both the needs and the assets required for successful redevelopment. The 19 contiguous census tracts include 64,125 residents and a poverty rate of 35.03%. The area also includes some of San Antonio's most violent sectors (the area's Part I violent crime rate per 1,000 residents is 2.78, compared to the City's rate of 0.78) and lower employment rates (88.41%, compared to the City's rate of 94.0%). Juxtaposing EPZ poverty with employment indicate that many employed residents work less than full time and/or work in low wage jobs.

On the plus side, the EPZ enjoys close proximity to downtown San Antonio, is bounded on three sides by major highways, enabling wider community access, and is adjacent to two of the region's largest employers, Fort Sam Houston and the San Antonio Military Medical Center. Yet despite these assets, economic development - job creation, new business starts, retention of existing businesses - has been shallow.

The City has demonstrated its commitment to the redevelopment and revitalization of EPZ with significant infrastructure investments, the impact of which has been extended by Promise Neighborhood and Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grants and two Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Grants. Federal designation of the EastPoint Promise Zone offers the opportunity to integrate and leverage these initiatives and make new, material improvements to the community's economic health and the residents' quality of life by: (1) transforming EastPoint from a neighborhood of poverty into a viable, mixed-income neighborhood with high quality schools and educational programs and access to support services, public transportation, job training and jobs; and, (2) delivering economic revitalization and long-term stability and success by sustaining existing businesses and attracting new businesses, creating a vibrant commercial corridor that is the center of neighborhood activity. Six key activities are planned for the EPZ in the next five years.

Creating Jobs: Attract 50 new business starts and the job creation they yield by: employing a Business Expert armed with a sophisticated marketing toolbox that will favorably position the area to potential business owners and government contractors; using the existing Grow Eastside Fund to incentivize new business starts; continue expanding other creative incentives, e.g., subsidized rent, insurance risk pools, and specialized security services.

Increasing Economic Activity: Enable business development and retention by strengthening the pipeline of skilled talent in the EPZ; partner with education and training providers to assemble a comprehensive array of in-area, high quality certificate or degree-based career training in local demand occupations; secure placement of a One Stop Center in the EPZ; prioritize City General Fund investments to non-profits providing support services that remove barriers to employment and promote employment retention.

Improving Educational Opportunities: Increase enrollment in high quality PreK programs to enhance school readiness; support local school districts' efforts to install a STEM-focus to equip students with skillsets that ensure success in high school, college and career; expand enrollment in Early College Programs to increase the number of college and career ready graduates in the EPZ; increase adult education opportunities.

Reducing Serious or Violent Crime: Increase proactive policing activities that take high-risk persons off the streets; increase situational prevention strategies, e.g., improved lighting, performing or requesting code inspections, cleaning up vacant lots, razing abandoned buildings.

Leveraging Private Capital: Pledge 50% of existing business assistance grants to EPZ enterprises; designate commercial corridors within EPZ as a Neighborhood Empowerment Zone and Local HUB Zone to attract new businesses and support business retention; develop an incubator/accelerator program for veteran

entrepreneurs; facilitate the use of project financing options available from the New Markets Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, EB-5 and TIF; return vacant, underutilized properties to productive use through REnewSA.

Reducing Poverty and Unemployment: Reduce poverty and unemployment by increasing accessible workforce development and adult education resources; increase affordable housing stock by creating/preserving 631 units of mixed income housing, partnering with private non-profits to construct new houses on publicly owned infill lots, and renovating publicly owned vacant houses, subsequently selling/leasing them to eligible families; attract new housing developers with subsidized infill lots, fee waivers, tax reimbursement grants/loans.

The enactment of federal tax credits will stimulate the job creation and business development that is essential to the full realization of the EastPoint Promise Zone.